

2002 OVERVIEW

By Roger Rostvet

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The mission of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department is to protect, conserve and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for sustained public consumptive and nonconsumptive use.

Last year the North Dakota Game and Fish Department experienced some invigorating highs and faced complex challenges when dealing with the changing face of hunting in times of plenty.

Fish and game populations are at levels not seen in recent times: record deer populations, good pheasant numbers and more fishable lakes than once considered possible. The state's wet weather cycle has benefitted fisheries and waterfowl. Relatively mild, dry winters have allowed excellent carryover of upland game birds and big game animals.

States to the west of us have experienced drought for a number of years. Because of this, Missouri River flows in North Dakota have been reduced. In 2002, the North Dakota portion of Lake Oahe was almost unusable for boat fishermen and the level of Lake Sakakawea continues to fall and is projected to be at 1,820 feet mean sea level by spring 2003.

Even though a large portion of North Dakota had relatively normal precipitation, the southwest and south central portions were extremely dry. Pheasant reproduction in the driest areas was reported to be spotty, and many wetlands were either diminished in size or were dry for the first time in 10 years.

Financially, the Game and Fish Department has not felt the strain of a national recession. The Department's 2001-03 budget was projected to be a deficit-spending budget. However, revenue increases from resident and nonresident license sales, as well as increases in federal funding, allowed the Department to maintain current programs and make significant contributions toward expanded habitat and access programs. Instead of budget shortfalls, the reserve balance is expected to remain static. Private lands programs are currently the largest single budget item.

Resource allocation became an issue in 2002, when the Department recommended moving the pheasant season opening date ahead one week. There was a perception by sportsmen that the balance between resident sportsmen interests and the economics of hunting had shifted. This appeared to be a continuation of the debate on resource allocation that had deadlocked legislators during the 2001 session. Moving the season forward was viewed as a concession to commercial interests and an endorsement of commercialism by government. There was sufficient discord about this decision to prompt the Governor to direct the Game and Fish Department and the Game and Fish advisory board to hold public forums in each of the eight advisory districts around the

state. Upon review of the input received, the early pheasant season opener was rescinded.

It was evident from testimony given at those meetings that the Department should be expanding the public hunting access portion of its private lands program as soon as possible. The Department asked for support from Governor Hoeven to request an emergency expansion of spending authority. An additional 1.5 million was approved from Game and Fish reserve funds to implement an aggressive expansion of the Private Land Open to Sportsmen program. Goals were set to expand PLOTS acreages from 160,000 acres to 500,000 by the fall of 2007.

In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed allowing northern states to open duck and goose seasons one week earlier than normal. This is something North Dakota had been requesting for many decades. The Department sought public input for the fall waterfowl season through advisory board meetings. The one week earlier portion of season was accepted and reserved for residents only. In addition, nonresident licenses were limited to 30,000, approximately the same number sold in 2001.

Since the 2001 legislative session the Judiciary B interim committee met numerous times to study issues relating to resident and nonresident hunting and surplus elk in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. They took public testimony and gathered vast amounts of information, including data provided by the Game and Fish Department. Numerous bill drafts have been developed which should provide a basis for the legislature to develop policy on how wildlife resources are allocated in the future.

Farm Program

In May, President George W. Bush signed the 2002 Farm Bill. The six-year legislation will increase spending for conservation programs by 80 percent over that provided by the 1996 bill. This bill includes generous support for the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program. Although North Dakota may not see significant increases in CRP acres, maintaining levels in the 3 million acre area will continue to benefit wildlife as it has in the past.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

Since 1992 the Department's planning system, Participative Management has been the guiding document for our operation. A decade has passed since the original Department plan was formalized.

Many of the goals, objectives, programs and projects have served us well but may need updating. Others need to be combined, eliminated or significantly modified. It is our goal to completely review Department plans and update goals and objectives by the end of 2003.

Due to increased public concern and reports of illegal commercial activities, the enforcement division stepped up undercover operations in 2001 and 2002. Based on completed cases and pending investigations, it is apparent that this type of operation is both needed and effective, and at times, the only method available to gain factual knowledge of illegal activities.

Undercover operations are not random and are designed to target operations that were predisposed to committing game violations. The violation rate was extremely high and in some cases openly flagrant of game laws. It is disappointing to report that these types of operations will need to be continued in the future. It is also apparent that many successful commercial businesses operate within the law and are being stigmatized by those who do not.

COVERLOCKS FOR CONSERVATION

CoverLocks for Conservation, a partnership program with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, has completed its first annual cycle.

This private lands program develops 20-acre parcels into high quality resident wildlife habitat for which USDA pays a landowner a \$750 signup bonus, annual

CRP payments, including a 20 percent incentive, for 15 years. The Game and Fish Department picks up what is called the backside CRP easement payment that compensates the landowner for another 15 years, and includes public access for the full quarter on which the CoverLock is located. A 30-year use easement keeps the 20-acre CoverLock in wildlife cover for that period and a 30-year public access easement covers the entire quarter. A landowner can continue to use the 140 acres of the quarter as he sees fit. Landowners may qualify for more than one CoverLock.

Added to the first four pilot CoverLocks established in Emmons County in 2001, are 40 more CoverLocks established in 10 of 17 eligible counties during spring, 2002. At this writing an additional 70 offers are in various stages of approval. We anticipate that by the end of the current biennium in June, 2003 we will have established 114 CoverLocks.

PRIVATE LAND INITIATIVE

The Private Land Initiative is the Department's method of enhancing and conserving habitat on the private landscape of North Dakota. Central to the PLI goals and objectives is the development of wildlife habitat on private lands with a public access benefit.

The PLI has three primary goals in fulfilling the Department's mission: 1) To conserve and enhance habitats for fish and wildlife populations; 2) To provide landowners interested in wildlife conservation with assistance for developing and protecting wildlife habitat; and 3) To provide the public with opportunities to access fish and wildlife resources on private land, the primary focus being hunting access.

These goals are accomplished by providing financial and technical assistance to private landowners through cost-shar-

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ACCESS PROVIDED FALL 2002 - PLOTS PROGRAM

113,824 acres	456 CRP Cost-sharing PLOTS
96,890 acres	323 Habitat PLOTS
10,250 acres	- CRP Cost-share Replacement
10,140 acres	59 CREP/ CoverLocks
8,962 acres	35 Native Forest PLOTS
4,096 acres	30 Waterbank (NDGF \$\$)
1,527 acres	7 Tree Planting Cost-share PLOTS
1,501 acres	25 Food PLOTS
1,200 acres	2 Beginning Farmer PLOTS
1,113 acres	4 WRP Incentive PLOTS

**Total Public Access Acres
Fall 2002: 249,503 acres**

ing programs, rental/easement programs, and cooperative project agreements.

The PLI is funded from the sale of habitat stamps and interest accrued from the Department's general account balance. PLI habitat programs include practices such as grass plantings, wildlife tree/shrub plantings, aspen management, habitat protection, wildlife water developments, nesting structures, and cooperative projects. Agreements with landowners, which combine both habitat enhancements and public access, are referred to as Conservation PLOTS (Private Land Open To Sportsmen) agreements.

WHITE-TAILED DEER

Due to several mild winters in a row, the state's white-tailed deer herd is at an all time high. This meant a record number of deer licenses – 116,925 – for the fall 2002 hunting season.

Nearly all deer hunting units in the state have had increased license numbers over the past two years. The only exception is in the units along the Little Missouri River where white-tailed deer numbers are depressed due to an EHD outbreak in 2001.

Aggressive efforts to reduce the overall population of white-tailed deer will continue until we stabilize license numbers in the range of 90,000 to 95,000. The long term goal is to manage white-tailed deer numbers at lower levels than we have seen over the past few years.

Interest in hunting white-tailed deer continues to grow despite the concerns in other parts of the country about chronic wasting disease. In North Dakota, hunters are aware that CWD has never been documented in the state and seem to understand the facts surrounding the disease. Department biologists will continue efforts to inform citizens as we learn more about this disease.

During the 2002 hunting season our Department collected samples from hunter-killed deer in particular units around the state to test for presence of CWD. This first year was intended to determine the logistics necessary for expansion of testing on a statewide basis.

PRONGHORN

Pronghorns continue to slowly increase after the devastating winter of 1996-1997. The 2002 pronghorn population was estimated at nearly 6,300, based on a July aerial survey of just more than 14,000 square miles. The statewide estimate was similar to 2001, but the distribution and density varied considerably. The allocation of fall 2002 licenses reflected these changes. The number of licenses was reduced in the

extreme southwest, while more licenses were available in the badlands and slope regions. Pronghorn reproduction was good following the mild winter. Young-to-doe ratio was 0.77 in 2002, compared to 0.58 young-to-doe in 2001.

MULE DEER

Mule deer numbers in the badlands took a small step backward after poor recruitment in 2001. The 2001 fall mule deer reproduction survey indicated below average fawn recruitment, which in turn was reflected in the 2002 spring mule deer population index. Density of mule deer in the badlands declined from 10.2 per square mile in 2001 to 6.8 in 2002. In response to the slight decrease, licenses were reduced by 275 to 4,875 for the 2002 season. Mule deer reproduction in 2002 was much better following last year's mild winter. Young-to-doe ratio was 0.93, up from 0.76 young-to-doe in 2001.

ELK & MOOSE

Statewide elk and moose populations remain stable. In 2002, 216 elk and 135 moose licenses were issued, similar to the number of licenses available in 2001. Hunter success, especially for moose, remains high. Moose continue to spread across the state and Game and Fish opened more area to moose hunting in 2002.

BIGHORN SHEEP

The four bighorn sheep license holders (one via auction and three via lottery) successfully tagged a ram in 2002.

The bighorn sheep population south of I-94 continues to improve, as transplants that occurred in 2001 and 2002 have added to the population's long-term viability. The bighorn population north of I-94 is stable with good numbers of mature rams and ewes.

Lamb production in 2002 was encouraging, as at least 32 lambs were still alive in November; this compares to nine surviving lambs in November 2001.

The lambs are capable of eluding predators, so barring disease, most should survive the winter.

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RING-NECKED PHEASANTS

Spring 2002 surveys revealed a 15.2 percent increase in the pheasant crowing count index. This was the fifth year in a row that the spring rooster index increased.

Late-summer roadside counts in 2002 showed marked improvement over 2001. An increase of more than 37 percent in the number of pheasants observed per 100 miles of travel shows the summer drought of 2002 had little effect on our pheasant hatch.

Preliminary 2002 harvest data indicates that pheasant hunters averaged 2.35 pheasants per hunter per day on opening weekend, compared to 2.25 pheasants per day in 2001.

WILD TURKEYS

Spring hunting in North Dakota continues to be popular. In 2002 we set records for number of licenses available (3,310), hunters (2,888) and gobblers bagged (1,679).

A mild winter last year followed by good reproduction also allowed us to open two new fall hunting units in 2002. Indicators at this time show that fall wild turkey hunters have done well.

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE

Reproductive surveys in summer, 2001 indicated below average production, and that usually means lower breeding populations the next spring. However, sharptail counts in spring 2002 were up about 20 percent statewide, with all districts showing good increases. The extremely mild winter coupled with an excellent buffaloberry crop apparently led to low mortality on sharptails. Brood surveys in summer 2002 indicated better production than the previous year, so the fall outlook was better.

The only measure of hunter success so far in 2002 is the postcard survey from opening weekend, and hunters did have better success. Hunters averaged a little over 1 1/2 grouse each in 2001 but

improved to a little over two grouse each in 2002. The total harvest in 2002 should be higher than in 2001.

HUNGARIAN PARTRIDGE

This plucky little bird is struggling to build to former numbers, but the recovery is still inching up. Rural mail carriers reported 7.62 partridge per 1,000 miles in 2002, the highest number since 1993. However, the population is still far below former numbers.

Hunter success on opening weekend of the 2002 season was slightly improved, rising from .12 birds-per-hunter to .18 birds per hunter. Harvest in 2002 will probably be a little higher than 2001.

SAGE GROUSE

Sage grouse numbers were down in spring of 2002, the second year of decline. This followed two years of increases and the population in 2002 was near the previous eight-year average.

Sage grouse remain a minor species as far as hunters are concerned. In 2001, 129 sage grouse hunters averaged 0.27 birds per hunter which indicated a harvest of only 35 sage grouse. Biologists actually checked 20 birds in the field. In 2002, the number of hunters appeared to be up somewhat and data were collected from 26 sage grouse. Total harvest will probably be near the harvest figure of 2001.

RUFFED GROUSE

Ruffed grouse populations in 2002 are at or near the current 10-year cyclic low. Ruffed grouse populations may begin the slow rebuilding process in spring 2003.

In North Dakota, the population peaked around 1999 and will peak again in 2008 or 2009. The general population trend is decreasing because of aging forests and loss of forestland. Ruffed grouse program objectives seek to stabilize the long-term population through management of public and private forests and acquisition/leasing of forestlands, providing stable hunting opportunities within natural cycles.

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WATERFOWL AND OTHER MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS DUCKS

Water conditions were down in 2002 but still 10 percent above the 1948-2001 average. Dry conditions prevailed throughout prairie Canada, but duck numbers in North Dakota remained high. Abundant CRP-provided nesting cover produced another large flight of ducks from North Dakota.

A major happening this year was the dispute over nonresident waterfowl hunter numbers. Resident hunters have felt for years that increasing numbers of nonresident waterfowl hunters has caused increased leasing of hunting areas by both guiding operations and nonresident hunters, and a general decline in hunting opportunity for everyone. On the other hand, economic interests have exerted tremendous pressure to maintain and even increase hunter numbers as an additional source of income. As an interim measure, the Governor capped nonresident waterfowl hunting licenses at 30,000 for 2002 – equal to the record high set in 2001. Cold temperatures and snow froze many ponds as early as October 21, abruptly ending waterfowl hunting over much of the state.

CANADA GEESE

Resident Canada geese continue to do well and numbers are well above our

objective level. September hunting seasons designed to let hunters take more of these birds have produced harvests of 37,000 in 2000 and 38,000 in 2001. We expect the 2002 September harvest to be similar.

In response to increasing complaints about Canada goose depredation to crops, the Department obtained a special permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that allows landowners to take a limited number of Canada geese as part of a depredation control activity. This program was initiated late in the 2002 growing season and we had few participants. We expect increased demand for these Canada goose “kill permits” in 2003.

Migrant small Canada geese were late arriving this year and harvest will probably be down. Western Prairie Canadas also came in late, but were providing good hunting along the Missouri River well into December 2002.

SNOW GEESE

Growth of the Mid-continent Snow Goose Population appears to have leveled off as a result of increased harvest during the regular and Conservation Order seasons. While spring hunting of snow geese in North Dakota has been marginal the past two years, hunters in other parts of the Central and Mississippi flyways have been able to harvest significant numbers

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of birds under Conservation Order provisions. The 2002 North Dakota spring snow goose harvest is estimated at 6,400 birds. Fall 2002 harvest will probably be low due to late arrival and early departure of the birds.

SANDHILL CRANES

The Mid-continent Sandhill Crane Population remains healthy. This has allowed expansion of hunting opportunities in the eastern part of the state in 2001 and 2002. The Department has worked for years to justify opening the area east of U.S. Highway 281 to hunting. We have one more year on this experimental season and then we hope to keep this area open to crane hunting permanently.

Cranes have been entering the state later each fall, probably because of weather and lack of hunting pressure in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. To counter this, we have slowly adjusted the season later in September to coincide with migra-

tion. These factors have contributed to continued interest in crane hunting and better hunting success. In 2001, approximately 3,002 hunters (up 21 percent from 2000) hunted cranes and harvested 5,152 birds, about the same as in 2000.

TUNDRA SWANS

Hunters remain interested in swan hunting, with more applicants in 2002 than the 2,000 permits available. Though these birds do not nest in North Dakota, the state is in the middle of their migration corridor allowing hunters a good opportunity to harvest one of these trophy birds.

During the 2002 Mid-winter survey, 104,100 eastern tundra swans were observed, six percent more than last year. During the last 10 years these estimates have increased an average of four percent per year. Swan hunter success has ranged from 36-63 percent.

FURBEARER

Sarcoptic mange is still prevalent in North Dakota's red fox, and to a lesser degree in coyotes. The disease appears to have shifted from the north and northeast to the south central and southeastern regions of the state.

Mange has fast become one of the main players in furbearer management in North Dakota. As a result, fox numbers are still down and coyotes are moving into new areas. Resident furbearer licenses sold for 2001-02 decreased slightly, while sportsmen's licenses have increased.

Bobcat trappers and hunters enjoyed a substantial increase in pelt prices, and the overall bobcat harvest for 2001-02 was three times that of 2000-01 season.

Furs bought by North Dakota furbuyers during the 2000-01 season were valued at \$160,936.28, a substantial increase from previous years.

Mink populations appear to be doing quite well, beaver harvest increased last year but muskrat harvest decreased.

Spring surveys indicated coyote densities were highest in the Missouri Slope region, while red fox densities were highest in the Drift Prairie region. Overall coyote densities have increased in the Missouri Coteau while overall red fox densities continue to decrease. On a positive note, healthy fox and numerous fox dens have been sighted in the north central portion of the state.

FISHERIES PROGRAMS

MISSOURI RIVER SYSTEM

Paddlefish snagging harvest was once again high, mandating an early closure to the snagging season. The high harvest was a result of low runoff causing paddlefish

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to congregate in the North Dakota portion of the Missouri/Yellowstone rivers. The continuation of above-average harvest in conjunction with insufficient recruitment has caused the Department to consider more conservative management applications.

Goals were set that will maintain the current adult paddlefish population at its current level, sustain a paddlefish snagging fishery, and provide the simplest regulations possible. The Department is considering reducing the time available to snag paddlefish, increasing the cost of paddlefish tags (which will require legislative action), and possibly providing for a "snag and release" only portion of the season, where snagging opportunity would exist but no harvest would occur.

Walleye fishing on Lake Sakakawea remained good in 2002. Natural reproduction was poor, but with a combination of natural reproduction and stocking efforts in recent years the walleye population is still balanced. Walleye size structure is balanced, with numbers of walleye over 20 inches similar to the past few years.

Water levels are of concern, with low runoff in 2002 and long-term predictions not showing much promise for increased snow pack in the plains or mountains.

The 2002 chinook salmon fishery was similar to past years but average size was down slightly. The Department goal of 1.5 million salmon eggs was exceeded with 1.7 million eggs collected. Current plans are to stock 400,000 chinook salmon smolt into Lake Sakakawea in 2003, but water levels, coldwater habitat, and the rainbow smelt forage base are being monitored closely and the number stocked may be reduced if any of those factors show a serious decline.

Rainbow smelt, the major forage in Lake Sakakawea, appear to be doing well at the moment. A hydroacoustic study in 2002 revealed that numbers were stable to slightly up, which is a good sign for the future of the Lake Sakakawea fishery.

Lake Sakakawea was one of 27 water bodies in which darkhouse spearing for northern pike was allowed in 2002. Sakakawea had a harvest of approximately 450 pike during the inaugural season, which was third in the state for use and harvest.

The Missouri River-Lake Oahe fishery is static. Walleye numbers are good, but size and growth are a concern because the lake lacks an adequate, long-term forage base. Unfortunately, North Dakota has been dramatically affected by dry conditions in Lake Oahe and access to the fishery is limited.

DEVILS LAKE

The fishery in Devils Lake was very good and will likely continue to improve. Walleye were not stocked in 2002 for the second consecutive year because of good natural reproduction.

The daily creel limit on northern pike was increased to five on Devils Lake in an effort to stimulate interest. Darkhouse spearing was also allowed on Devils Lake with an estimated harvest of a little over 350 pike. Most of the spearing occurred on the western portion of the lake.

Although yellow perch are doing well, fishing success is generally only fair. Increasing lake size and adequate food supply are likely two factors contributing to this. Perch reproduction was poor in 2002 but is not currently a cause for concern. It appears that good reproductive effort, such as occurred in 2001, is sufficient to maintain a perch fishery.

SMALL LAKES AND RESERVOIRS

Good water levels in most small lakes continued in 2002, especially in the southeast. These lakes will continue to provide great fishing opportunities as long as the habitat is available. Few areas of the state experienced fish kills in 2002.

The Save Our Lakes program was initiated in 2001 to preserve, enhance and restore aquatic habitat in lakes across the state. Fifty-three lakes were chosen for work with 13 destined to receive attention in 2002. Most current work is in the watersheds and directed at providing wetland filters, as well as shoreline stabilization on smaller reservoirs. Northern pike populations continue to do well in much of the state. Many areas are seeing reproduction of pike from original stockings in the mid-1990s. Seven of the top 10 darkhouse spearing lakes were smaller lakes and reservoirs.

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MID-SIZED RESERVOIRS

The fisheries of most mid-sized reservoirs continued to do well, and either meet or exceed objectives for quality size fish.

Water levels and water level control are critical factors in maintaining fish populations in mid-sized reservoirs. Habitat is always a major factor in whether fishing is good from year to year.

RIVERS AND STREAMS

North Dakota rivers and streams have the ability to provide great fishing during portions of the year. Access may be a major factor that sometimes limits their use, but unfamiliarity is likely also a contributor.

Modification of dams occurred on the Red River with Riverside Dam in Grand Forks and the North and South Dams in Fargo receiving attention. The modification of Riverside Dam was completed in 2002 with dams in the Fargo area garnering work that will reach into the next year.

CONSERVATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Department continued to be active in formulating technical guidance to eliminate, reduce or mitigate habitat destruction associated with various projects. Over 500 individual projects were reviewed in 2002.

We continue to work with the U.S. Forest Service on "Forest Plan" issues and habitat studies on the Dakota Prairie Grasslands.

The Dakota Prairie Grassland Plan was signed this summer. The U.S. Forest Service will conduct reviews of 60 sample allotments to quantify impacts of the plan

on a number of interests.

A second public land issue is the creation of backcountry camping areas along Lake Sakakawea. The Department worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to draft and implement guidelines for primitive shoreline camping on Corps areas adjacent to Lake Sakakawea. This will allow primitive camping along certain areas of the lake while continuing to protect important natural and cultural resources.

With the passage of federal legislation in 2001 and state wildlife grant legislation in 2002, a funding mechanism has been developed that allows states to improve their nongame programs. The Department used some of its share to hire two additional biologists to develop a conservation strategy for nongame species in North Dakota.

After finalizing the management plan for black-tailed prairie dogs last year, the Department initiated a survey to quantify the locations and size of prairie dog colonies in the state. That survey is nearing completion and we should have a final report this winter. We intend to monitor population trends every three years.

Flooding and drainage continue to affect fish and wildlife resources. Issues range from placing fill in small wetlands to transferring water between basins. We continue to work with stakeholders along the "Garrison Reach" of the Missouri River in an attempt to find common ground related to bank stabilization. We are also participating in the Bureau of Reclamation's study of water needs for the Red River Basin. The Department is assisting the Bureau in identifying potential aquatic habitat needs of fish and wildlife resources associated with the Red and Sheyenne rivers.

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION Web Site

The Game and Fish Department's web site provides access to timely information as well as a method to purchase licenses and submit applications. Hunters and anglers use the site more each year. One year ago in this review we reported more than 2 million hits in 2001, about double the amount of use in 2000. In 2002, the site attracted nearly 3 million hits in July alone.

Through September 2002, the Game and Fish web site accommodated more than 10 million hits, and will likely top 12 million by year's end.

North Dakota Outdoors Television

"North Dakota Outdoors" maintains its presence on nine in-state television sta-

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tions, with at least one station in each major market. Viewership is estimated at 50,000 weekly.

In addition to maintaining a weekly program, the video section also produces seasonal public service announcements for distribution to broadcast television. In 2002 the video team also produced a documentary on the Department's Private Land Initiative, and with the help of intern Becky Pedersen, produced an instructional program on car-deer collisions for use in drivers training classes throughout the state.

North Dakota OUTDOORS Magazine

North Dakota OUTDOORS maintains more than 28,000 subscribers, a number that increased slightly over the past year. The Game and Fish Department's magazine appeals to a varied audience of hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts. Over the last 12 months *OUTDOORS* took an in-depth look at a variety of issues, including a 2001 hunting season recap, changes in Missouri River fisheries, waterfowl season setting, prairie dogs, chronic wasting disease, hunting access to private land, the role of wildlife organizations in wildlife management, and expansion of agency private lands programs.

News Release

Each week Game and Fish issues a news release with information important to hunters, anglers, trappers, wildlife watchers and others. State, regional and national media consistently use this information in their publications and broadcasts.

In the past year communications section staff began an aggressive campaign to convert recipients of mailed news releases to email. Reduced postage and printing requirements, along with changing the printing contract to the state's printing division, will save the Game and Fish Department several thousand dollars each year.

Phone and Walk-in Service

More than 4,000 people per month call, email or personally visit the Game and Fish Department Bismarck office with requests for information or questions that require a response. Our information specialists consistently provide courteous, quality public service in a demanding work environment.

Outreach

Fargo – The Valley Outdoors, a newspaper column written by West Fargo outreach biologist Doug Leier, became a regular feature in the Fargo Forum's Sunday

outdoors section and also the Valley City Times-Record, bringing the total circulation to 18 different weekly and two daily newspapers.

Leier hosts a weekly outdoor radio program, which expanded to include stations in Bismarck, Minot, Grand Forks, and Dickinson along with the previous station in Fargo carrying the hour-long Saturday shows.

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Grand Forks – New outreach biologist Marty Egeland worked on getting known around the Grand Forks area, and over the year had numerous and varied presentations. Egeland attended many Envirothon meetings, and wrote questions for the Joint Manitoba-North Dakota Envirothon. He served on technical boards for the Grand Forks Greenway, North Red River Access Advisory Board and Red River Riparian Board.

Bismarck – Outreach biologist Jeb Williams established a monthly radio show with KFYZ. He also developed the Department's new YOUTH program aimed at increasing land available to young hunters. Approximately 5,000 stickers have been distributed statewide.

Minot – One of the region's highlights continues to be the Department's involvement at the North Dakota State Fair. In addition, several outdoor education classes were held in the area and the Department participates in as many as possible. Some of these classes/camps included: fish camp, North Dakota Wildlife Federation camp, several eco-ed classes, Mouse River loop envirothon, and classroom presentations in a multi-county area of northwestern North Dakota. Outreach biologist Greg Gullickson is involved with at least a dozen different conservation organizations and clubs throughout the region.

Boat and Water Safety

More than 1,500 North Dakota boaters passed the Boating Basics courses in 2002. The course is required for youngsters ages 12-15 who wish to operate a motorboat or personal watercraft. Some insurance companies also offer premium discounts to adults who pass the course.

More than 1,500 children and adults participated in the "Kids in Boats" program, a joint effort between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Game and Fish Department.

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There were 19 reported boating accidents in 2002. We had six boating fatalities; one occurred while fishing, one while recreational boating, and four occurred while hunting. Life jackets were not used in any of the fatalities. Our goal in the future is to increase awareness of life jacket use for fishermen and hunters in boats.

Becoming an Outdoors Woman

The Game and Fish Department has completed its eighth year of offering the Becoming an Outdoors Woman program. The three-day workshop is held at Lake Metigoshe State Park in August and provides opportunities for 100 women to learn outdoor skills in a user-friendly environment. Our goal is to promote hunting and fishing as family activities, to encourage ethical behavior, and demonstrate the use of inexpensive and user-friendly equipment. The 2003 workshop is August 15-17. The cost is \$120 per woman, which covers food, lodging and all necessary equipment. Contact Nancy Boldt at 701-328-6312 for more information or a registration form.

Watchable Wildlife

The goal of the Watchable Wildlife Program is to enhance public knowledge and appreciation of wildlife through Game and Fish sponsored activities. The watchable wildlife newsletter is sent to more than 4,000 supporters. Last year's winter bird

survey had 650 participants. The bluebird recovery programs maintain approximately 300 participants.

The annual Watchable Wildlife photo contest features all wildlife species with categories including game, nongame, and plants and insects. Forty-seven individuals submitted photos to the 2002 contest.

The annual "Bird It Up" field trip continues to be a success with 50 individuals participating each spring. Once again, the Department held a Wildlife Adventure Hunt for kids in cooperation with the Bismarck Tribune Sports Show. The Department spent approximately \$5,000 on small grants providing funds to schools, scout groups, and other wildlife organizations to construct nesting structures.

Educational posters and other valuable resource information are also available free of charge.

Hunter Education

More than 630 volunteer instructors help make the Department's hunter education program a success. In 2002, instructors taught the 14-hour program to 5,800 students in 200 communities.

Volunteers help out at the popular Pathway to Hunting event at the State Fair as well, which introduced gun safety and hunter responsibility to more than 3,000 youngsters.

Hunter education staff and volunteers also:

- Provided the International Bowhunter Education Program on a voluntary basis in cooperation with the North Dakota Bowhunter Association to 120 students in six classes.
- Conducted volunteer hunter education instructor annual convention and recognition event.
- Provided hunter education classes for women only in all major communities.
- Cooperated with the ND Wildlife Federation at two youth camps.
- Cooperated with Missouri Valley Shooting Sports at their NRA Sportsfest and First Time Pheasant Hunt.

Project WILD/Aquatic Education

North Dakota's Project WILD/Aquatic Education conducted six workshops for 78 teachers. Volunteers contributed 153 hours during these workshops. Teachers received both the Project WILD/Aquatics guides, sets of posters, WILD coloring books, and WILD/AQUATICS facts.

During our teacher workshops we include instruction on how to use a 50-foot plastic whale, a WILD box of animal parts, and two aquatic boxes with water testing kits to interest students in learning about wildlife and doing Project WILD and Aquatic activities.

LICENSES AND PERMITS ISSUED 2001

	Resident	Nonresident		Resident	Nonresident
Fishing	49,102	7,085	Deer Gun Hunting	97,163	1,346
Husband/Wife Fishing	20,070	2,046	Deer Gun Hunting(Gratis)	11,139	78
Senior Citizen Fishing	12,609		Deer Bow Hunting	11,903	1,325
Disabled Fishing	516		Deer Bow Hunting(Gratis)	58	
Short Term Fishing			Antelope Gun Hunting	821	
7-Day		7,939	Antelope Gun Hunting(Gratis)	334	
3-Day		21,237	Antelope Bow Hunting	890	90
Paddlefish Tags	3,341	855	Moose Hunting	135	
Commercial Fishing	18		Moose Hunting(Preferential Landowner)	17	
Retail Bait Vendor	167		Elk Hunting	192	
Wholesale Bait Vendor	34	9	Elk Hunting(Preferential Landowner)	36	
Fish Hatchery	5		Bighorn Sheep	4	
2001 Boat Registrations	5,677		Turkey Hunting(Spring)	2,672	
(last year 3-year decal)			Turkey Hunting(Fall)	6,191	
Boat Rentals	22		Turkey Hunting(Gratis Spring)	304	
General Hunting	65,835	42,603	Turkey Hunting(Gratis Fall)	448	
Small Game Hunting	33,059	41,702	Habitat Stamp	108,438	
Sportsmen's License	33,895		Shooting Preserve(1996-1997)	27	
Waterfowl Hunting		30,029	Hunting/Fishing Guide	349	
Furbearer Hunting/Trapping	16,494	1,326	Taxidermist	105	
Fur Buyer(2000-2001)	31		Falconry	1	1
Nongame Hunting		625	Scientific Collector	30	

SUMMARY OF VIOLATIONS JULY 1, 2001 TO JUNE 30, 2002 (Continued on page 18)

Big Game (Gun)

Hunt without a license	33
No general game license and habitat stamp	13
Using another's license	7
Failure to carry license on person	5
Failure to sign or affix stamp	1
Shining (using artificial light)	27
Illegal possession/taking	34
Unlawful transportation	3
Aiding in concealment of unlawful game	7
Exceeding limit	2
Hunting in closed season	4
Hunting in wrong unit or closed area	17
Failure to tag game	31
Kill wrong species or sex	10
Use motor vehicle off established trail	34
Harass game with motor vehicle	2
Hunt on posted land without permission	23
Hunt before/after legal hours	6
Fail to accompany/transport other's game	1
Fail to wear fluorescent orange	3
Other big game violations	18
TOTAL	281

Big Game (Bow)

Hunting without a license	1
No general game license and habitat stamp	2
Failure to carry license on person	1
Shining (using artificial light)	5
Illegal possession or taking	2
Failure to tag	3
Using motor vehicle off trail	6
Failure to wear fluorescent orange	3
TOTAL	23

Upland Game

Hunt without small game license	3
Failure to carry license on person	3
Use shotgun capable of holding more than 3 shells	26
Illegal possession/taking	13
Aid in concealment of unlawful game	1
Exceeding limit	9
Hunting in closed season	1
Hunting in closed area	1
Failure to leave identification of sex on game	9
Killing wrong species or sex	5
Use motor vehicle off established trail	29
Hunt on posted land without permission	7
Hunt before or after legal hours	2
Failure to tag turkey	1
Other upland game violations	4
TOTAL	114

Migratory Birds

Hunt without small game/nonresident license	5
No general game license and habitat stamp	1
Failure to carry license on person	10
Fail to sign or affix stamp	13
Use shotgun capable of holding more than 3 shells	10
Illegal possession/taking	7
Exceed limits	16
Hunting in closed season	6
Hunting in closed area or zone	6
Failure to leave identification of sex on game	11
Kill wrong species or sex	1
Wanton waste	1
Harass game with motor vehicle	3
Hunt on posted land without permission	6
Hunt before/after legal hours	29
Nontoxic shot violations	8
Hunt without federal waterfowl stamp	3
Other migratory bird violations	12
TOTAL	148

SUMMARY OF VIOLATIONS (Continued)

Furbearer

Hunt/trap without a license	3
Use or possession of illegal snares	1
Fail to carry license on person	3
Shining/illegal use of lights for raccoon	4
Illegal possession or taking	5
Use motor vehicle off established trail during deer season ..	1
Harass furbearers with motor vehicle	1
Hunt/trap on posted land without permission	1
Other furbearer violations	3
TOTAL	22

Fishing

Fishing without a license	128
Fish house left on ice without identification	11
Failure to carry license on person	53
Use more than legal number of hooks per pole/line	2
Illegal method of taking fish	9
Exceeding limit	39
Fishing in closed area	4
Taking undersized/oversized fish	16
Possess or use illegal trap, seine, net, or set line	1
Fail to remove fish house	15
Deposit fish/fish parts on ice or shore	1
Fish with or possession of illegal bait	3
Failure to attend lines	6
Fish with excessive lines	39
Sell fish/bait without a license	1
Paddlefish, pallid sturgeon violations	11
Other fish, frog, turtle, clam violations	18
TOTAL	357

Photo omitted

2002 LICENSES AVAILABLE

Moose	136
Elk	216
Bighorn	4

APPLICATIONS RECEIVED 2002

Moose	13,092
Elk	12,179
Bighorn	8,239

Boating

Use unlicensed/unnumbered boat	143
Unlicensed boat rental	1
Operating without lights at night	17
Inadequate number of personal flotation devices	103
Fail to have observer while towing skier	76
Failure to report boating accident	3
Operate boat under influence/when intoxicated	11
Reckless/negligent operation	34
Other prohibited/hazardous operations	55
Other boating violations	21
TOTAL	464

Miscellaneous

Failure to register snowmobile/ATV	7
Shining wildlife	11
Cartridge in chamber (loaded firearm) in vehicle	86
440 yard violation	35
Kill or possess harmless birds	1
Wildlife management area/game refuge violation	20
Hunt in federal refuge/parks	11
Deface/remove official signs	1
Minor in possession of alcohol	46
Possession of controlled substance	3
Possession of drug paraphernalia	2
Hunt while intoxicated	2
No guide/outfitter license	6
No propagation permit	1
Misrepresentation on license application	88
Purchase hunting license without hunter safety course	2
Fail to appear on citation	7
Littering public use areas/waters	41
Shooting preserve violations	1
Other ND Game and Fish violations	22
Non-ND Game and Fish violations	18
TOTAL	411

TOTAL CITATIONS STATEWIDE1,820

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002

Income	\$ 18,834,853.25
Expenditures	\$ 16,136,618.63

FUND BALANCES, FIXED ASSETS & LONG TERM DEBT

Game and Fish General Fund	\$ 19,616,746.16
Habitat and Depredation Fund	\$ 2,853,271.35
Nongame Wildlife Fund	\$ 41,287.67
TOTAL ALL FUNDS	\$ 22,511,305.18
FIXED ASSETS	\$ 19,670,065.00

DEPARTMENT NET WORTH\$ 42,181,370.18

This statement is unaudited at the time of publication